

The word "revolution" implies drastic change, most often of a political nature, that results in a new form of government. There are other types of revolution as well. From the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, Europe underwent a social and economic revolution that was the result of technological progress inspired by inventive minds. No longer would humans be harnessed to the land, completely dependent on the vicissitudes of nature for their livelihood; a new world was dawning, based in the city and filled with the prospect of employment and new lives. But this was not a move toward economic independence, for humans would soon be harnessed to an even more exacting master than the land—the machine.

To many, industrialization became synonymous with progress. Increased production of goods meant greater potential for export, and this in turn created greater profit for the individual and government alike. The cultivation of new markets inspired competition among nations, exploration of new lands, and efficient management of time and labor. Yet industrialization, for all its glorification of the genius of the human mind, was never without its critics. It solved certain problems, but created others. What, for instance, was to be done with those people who moved to the city in search of factory employment and found themselves among the "technologically unemployed," looking for jobs that simply did not exist? And what of those who were fortunate enough to find work in the mills or the mines? The dull monotony and danger of their occupations, not to mention their subsistence living conditions, made life depressing. Factory workers dreaded unemployment, yet could do little to change their condition. As long as competition, efficiency, and profit were the primary catalysts of the Industrial Revolution, the laborer would have to be sacrificed.

The conflicts raised by industrialization were all the more bewildering because they were unprecedented. How, for example, was government to respond to the complex problems created by industrial progress? This question was of primary importance for Britain, the first industrial area and the subject of this chapter. British industrialization was stimulated in the nineteenth century by the needs of national defense in view of the threat imposed by Napoleon. Criticism by reformers was not tolerated by the government, which viewed such acts as unpatriotic and incendiary. By the 1820s, however, tentative reforms were made that led to a rather prolonged debate resulting in the Reform Bill of 1832. This ensured that most middle-class British subjects would receive parliamentary representation and opened the franchise to some of the new industrial towns whose populations had never before been represented. In the following years, further reforms were legislated, such as the Factory Act of 1833, which limited the working hours of women and children in the textile mills and provided government inspection of the workplace. Still, reform was not won without struggle. In the 1830s and 1840s, writers and literary figures such as Charles Dickens and historian Thomas Carlyle and political organizations such as the Chartists advocated constitutional and social change. Liberalism was born as a political philosophy, and intellectuals such as John

Stuart Mill (1806–1873) advocated workers' cooperatives, unions, and even women's suffrage.

Change was advocated from other directions as well. It was during this time that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels observed the conditions of the working class in England and composed one of the most influential documents of the modern world—*The Communist Manifesto* (1848). According to Marx, the true revolutionary force in society was the workers (proletarians) who were dominated and abused by capitalists interested in profit at the workers' expense. As Marx wrote: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." Other socialists less radical than Marx preached the need and inevitability of change to a more balanced society, based less on privilege and more on equality of opportunity.

The Industrial Revolution can thus be viewed in two ways: as a force for progress, an example of human ability to mold the environment, and as a demonstration of man's abuse of man, for the Industrial Revolution intensified class animosities and provided the catalyst for social change. The questions that emerge from this chapter are thus philosophical in nature yet practical in application. In order for civilization to progress, to move forward technologically, must there always be a price to pay in human suffering or abuse? And if that is the case, is it worth it? What indeed constitutes "progress"? The twentieth century has experienced some of the greatest technological change, from the invention of the automobile to the exploration of space. Have we too paid a price?

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